

Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Lebanon: Prospects for Fighting in the Alayh-Shuf Region

Summary

Escalating violence is likely to follow the Israeli withdrawal from the Alayh-Shuf region this weekend. If the Gemayel government deploys the Army in the Shuf, it will encounter stiff Druze resistance and renewed Muslim militia attacks in West Beirut. The Army probably cannot handle simultaneous violence in and outside the capital. If Army deployment is delayed, the Christian Lebanese Forces militia is likely to mount unilateral attacks---probably with mixed results---against entrenched Druze positions. Gemayel will expect the United States to take the lead in negotiating an eventual Army deployment into the mountains.

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Continued fighting in West Beirut requires the Army's resources in the capital. The Eighth, Sixth, and Fourth Brigades--earmarked for deployment to Alayh and the Shuf--have been heavily involved in fighting the Druze and Muslim militias. Without these brigades, the government will be unable to fill the vacuum left by withdrawing Israeli units. Therefore, the Government probably will decide to delay the move into the mountains.

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Christian Lebanese Forces militiamen, however, are likely to enter the Druze areas of the Shuf. Widespread reports today of Druze massacres of Christian villagers will further incite the Lebanese Forces against the Druze. Druze resistance to the Lebanese Forces incursion will be fierce because the Druze consider the Shuf their heartland and will defend it at all costs. [REDACTED]

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If the violence in the capital subsides and the government sends the Army into the Shuf, the Army probably will be unable to maintain the peace in the area. Army units will be at a disadvantage in the rugged terrain, which impedes the movement of heavy weapons. The Army will be vulnerable to attacks by Druze fighters using guerrilla tactics in the mountains. Shia Amal militiamen in West Beirut probably will support the Druze by attacking Army units remaining in the capital. The Druze aided the Shia this week by shelling Beirut. [REDACTED]

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This is a no-win situation for Gemayel. The government's best hope may lie in retaining control over the greater Beirut area and ignoring the Shuf for the present. Gemayel will expect the United States to take the lead in negotiating an eventual Army deployment into the mountains. A negotiated, peaceful deployment will remain all but impossible, however, if Amin Gemayel remains unable to form a national reconciliation government. [REDACTED]

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